

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 OC-06

CCO-00 PC-10 DRC-01 (ISO) W
----- 026280

R 162225Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3813

INFO AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

USCINCSO

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E O 11652 NA

TAGS SWEL PINS CO

SUBJ: PROTESTS IN THE LLANOS

1. COLOMBIA'S THINLY POPULATED EASTERN REGION, THE LLANOS, HAS BEEN DEPRIVED OF GROUND COMMUNICATION WITH THE REST OF THE COUNTRY SINCE MASSIVE LANDSLIDES BLOCKED THE ONLY CONNECTING ROAD LATE IN JUNE.

2. SINCE SHORTLY AFTER THE LANDSLIDES, THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE REGION, PROTESTING THE EXTENT OF THE GOC'S ASSISTANCE EFFORTS IN RESPONSE TO THE PRESENT EMERGENCY AND IN ADDITION, GIVING VENT TO THE LONG STANDING FEELING IN THE REGION THAT THE LLANOS IS LOW ON THE CENTRAL GOVT'S LIST OF PRIORITIES.

3. THE PRESENT ISOLATION OF THE LLANOS HAS SEVERELY AGGRAVATED THE REGION'S ECONOMY. META DEPARTMENT, ON THE WESTERN EDGE OF THE AREA, HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY HARD HIT; BOGOTA DAILY EL TIEMPO REPORTED ON JULY 16 THAT SOME SIXTH THOUSAND PEOPLE WERE NOW LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OUT OF WORK AND THAT THE TWENTY TWO HOTELS IN THE DISTRICT'S

LARGEST CITY, VILLAVICENCIO, WERE NEARLY EMPTY.

4. THE MOST RECENT DEMONSTRATIONS, AS REPORTED BY THE BOGOTA PRESS, CONSISTED OF A FOUR DAY TRANSPORT STRIKE IN VILLAVICENCIO AND A JULY

15 PROTEST MARCH OF 3500 PEOPLE IN THE SAME CITY. THE TRANSPORT STRIKE ENDED SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE PROTEST MARCH.

5. MILGROUP OFFICERS WHO HAVE BEEN ASSISTING IN THE RELIEF EFFORT BY AIRLIFTING HARVESTING EQUIPMENT TO THE REGION, REPORT THAT THE VILLAVICENCIO AIRPORT HAS BEEN UNAFFECTED BY THE DEMONSTRATIONS AND IS FUNCTIONING SMOOTHLY.

6. MIN OF GOVT ROBERTO ARENAS BONILLA STATED ON JULY 15 THAT THE ROAD WOULD BE REOPENED IN EIGHT DAYS AND AN ALTERNATE ROUTE COMPLETED IN THREE MONTHS. EVEN IF THE GOC IS ABLE TO MEET THIS TIME TABLE, THE LLANOS WILL REMAIN SOMEWHAT APART FROM THE ECONOMIC MAINSTREAM FOR SOME TIME TO COME AND THE DISCONTENT WHICH HAS MANIFESTED ITSELF DURING RECENT WEEKS WILL CONTINUE TO BE A FACTOR IN THE REGION. VAKY

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